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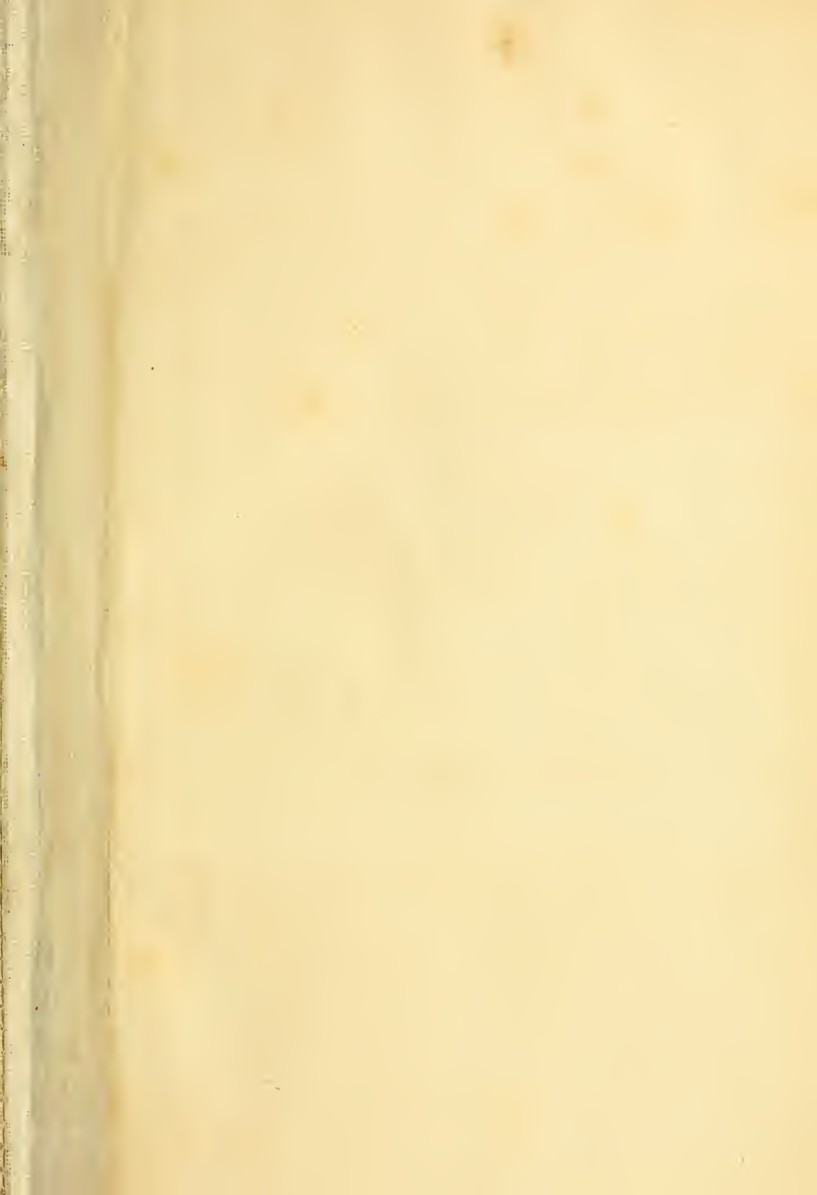
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Division .. SCC

Section .. 2430



REPORT OF THE MINORITY.

The minority of the Committee appointed by the Presbytery to consider the Inaugural Address of Professor C. A. Briggs, D.D., respectfully submit the following Report :

I. In the first part of the address, *The Sources of Divine Authority*, it is not sufficiently clear whether the Bible, the Church, and the Reason are regarded as co-ordinate or not. But the writer was speaking as a Protestant, and Protestants unite in exalting the Bible above the Church and the Reason. As a part of the inaugural service he had solemnly subscribed to the statement : " I believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice." And to avoid being misunderstood he, throughout the address, refers to his other writings for a fuller exposition of his views.

Thus in his *Biblical Study*, p. 1 : " The Bible is the chief source of the Christian religion, Christian theology, and Christian life. While other secondary and subsidiary sources may be used in connection with this principal source, they cannot dispense with it. For the Bible contains the revelation of redemption. Nowhere else can such a redemption be found, save where it has been derived from this fountain source, or from those sacred persons, institutions and events presented to us in the Bible."

(1.) *The Authority of the Church*.—This is clearly stated on p. 63 : " I am one of those who believes that God inhabits His Church, and guides it in its official decisions, not inerrantly in every utterance, but in the essential doctrines in which the universal Church is in concord."

And again, p. 65 : " The Bible, from the very nature of the case, leads us through its forms into the very presence-chamber of God, but our minds are filled at the same time with the historic forms of the ancient world. It is the office of the Church, in the use of its institutions, to bring us into communion with the Triune God in the forms of the modern world, and give us the assurance of His presence with the Church through its history, and with us in the hour and moment of our use of its institutions. The Church unites with the Bible in giving us the assurance of God's presence and authority throughout history, Christian as well as Hebrew, and of His gracious help in the present. It gives us the blessed experience of the communion of saints. It opens the eyes to see that we are in the outer ranks of innumerable lines of the host of the living God, ever on the march through the life in this world into the gates of Paradise, and

onward on the high way of holiness to the throne of God and the Lamb, which ever bounds the horizon of the beatific vision"

In this way "the majority of Christians from the apostolic age have found God through the Church. Martyrs and saints, fathers and schoolmen, the profoundest intellects, the saintliest lives have had this experience. Institutional Christianity has been to them the presence-chamber of God. They have therein and thereby entered into communion with all saints," p. 25.

All this is beautifully in accord with the teaching of the Confession concerning the Church. "Unto the catholic, visible Church Christ hath given the ministry, oracles and ordinances of God for the gathering and perfecting of the saints in this life to the end of the world ; and doth by his own presence and Spirit, according to his promise, make them effectual thereunto."—Chap. XXV, 2-3. And as to the Divine Authority in the Church: "The Lord Jesus as king and head of His Church hath therein appointed a government in the hand of church officers, distinct from the civil magistrate. To these officers the keys of the kingdom of heaven are committed, by virtue whereof they have power respectively to retain and remit sins, to shut that kingdom against the impenitent, both by word and censures, and to open it unto penitent sinners, by the ministry of the Gospel, and by absolution from censures, as occasion shall require."—Chap. XXX, 1-2.

(2.) *The Authority of the Reason*, p. 26—"Another means used by God to made Himself known is the forms of the Reason, using Reason in a broad sense, to embrace the metaphysical categories, the conscience and the religious feeling. Here in the Holy of Holies of human nature God presents himself to those who seek Him." If the conscience does not speak with a Divine Authority it has no legitimate authority. If God does not commune with man through the religious feeling, *i. e.*, the heart, communion with God is but a figure of speech. If God cannot be known through the forms of the Reason, He is unknowable, for even the Bible comes to men through the forms of the reason, and is addressed to the understanding, the conscience and the heart. It does not follow because "the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence are not sufficient to give that knowledge of God and of His will, which is necessary unto salvation," that the Holy Spirit, working in the heart and conscience, may not lead a man like Martineau to a true belief in God ; or because the Holy Scriptures are "most necessary," as one of the "outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicateth to us the benefits of redemption," that there can be no knowledge of God and no possibility of salvation apart from the Scriptures, for that is to affirm that the whole heathen world, without a possible exception, is lost for ever—a doctrine that the Church has declared needs revision.

11. In regard to the passage on *Inerrancy*, pp. 35, 36, your

Committee in the minority find nothing in the Confession that is antagonized by it. The expressions in Chap I: "By His singular care and providence kept pure in all ages and are therefore authentic;" "the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire perfection thereof, whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God;" "our full persuasion of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof," etc., all refer evidently to the Scriptures as they now exist in the original languages, not to the Scriptures as first committed to writing in the original manuscripts. But no one claims, and the Confession certainly does not claim, inerrancy for the Scriptures in their present text. The utmost that is claimed is inerrancy for the original manuscripts. Therefore, it is submitted, these expressions in the Confession cannot mean inerrancy.

Nor does the address deny the inerrancy of the original manuscripts. "I shall venture to affirm that, so far as I can see, there are errors in the Scriptures that no one has been able to explain, and the theory that they were not in the original text is sheer assumption, upon which no mind can rest with certainty." It is the *dogmatic* statement of inerrancy, that the Scriptures must be absolutely inerrant, for "one proved error destroys their authority"—that is opposed as dangerous. "These errors are all in the circumstantial, and not in the essentials; they are in the human setting, not in the precious jewel itself; Whether the divine authority extends to the circumstantial of this divine teaching or not, it is unwise, and it is unchristian to force men to accept the divine authority of the Bible or reject it, on the question of its inerrancy in the circumstantial and the details of every passage," p. 36.

It is difficult to avoid misunderstanding the address on these points, unless it is interpreted, as the writer requests that it may be, by the light of his other writings. The other side of his position is there seen. For example: In *Biblical Study*, p. 13, "Our adversaries may overthrow our systems of theology, our confessions and catechisms, our church organizations and methods of work, for these are, after all, human productions, the hastily thrown up outworks of the truth; but they can never contend successfully against the Word of God, that liveth and abideth forever, which though the heavens fall, and the earth pass away, will not fail in one jot or tittle from the most complete fulfillment, which will shine in new beauty and glory, as its parts are one by one searchingly examined, and which will prove itself not only invincible, but all conquering, as point after point is most hotly contested. We are assured that at last it will claim universal obedience as the pure and faultless mirror of Him who is Himself the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of His person." And p. 160: "Doubtless by God's 'singular care and providence they have been kept pure in all ages and are therefore authentic.' Doubtless throughout the

whole work of the authors', 'the Holy Spirit was present, causing His energies to flow into the spontaneous exercises of the writers' faculties, elevating and directing, where need be, and everywhere securing the errorless expression in language of the thought designed by God.' "

III On p. 53 is the statement: "Another fault of the Protestant theology is the limitation of the process of redemption to this world, and the neglect of those vast periods of time, which have elapsed for most men between death and the resurrection." This is at first startling, but only because of the somewhat unusual, but perfectly correct, sense in which the writer uses the word redemption. In the paragraph immediately preceding he defines his usage: "The Bible rises high above the faults of modern theology, and comprehends in its redemption of man his justification, sanctification, and glorification." Again on p. 52: "The redemption of the Bible comprehends the whole process of grace. Modern Protestants have unduly emphasized the beginning of redemption, justification by faith alone." The statement clearly means, not that those who are not redeemed in this life may be redeemed after death, but that those whose redemption is begun in this life, in their justification, will find the process continued and completed in their perfect sanctification and glorification in the life beyond. As to the dangerous doctrine that the issues of this life are not final, that death is not decisive, that there will be an opportunity given in the middle state for repentance and salvation; in other words, that there is a probation after death, there is not a hint of it in the address. On the contrary, it is expressly repudiated, p. 54. All that is affirmed regarding the middle state is, that the wicked sink into deeper and more awful depths of depravity, and the righteous rise to more blessed heights of sanctification and glorification. The interpretation that the writer gives to the teaching of the Confession on the subject of sanctification after death may or may not be correct. The question whether sanctification is completed in the *moment* "immediately after death," or in the *state* "immediately after death," is not vital to "the system of doctrine contained in the Confession of Faith." It is not sufficient, in order to establish charges, to show that he is at variance with certain phrases and expressions in the Confession, but that he is clearly in conflict with the system of doctrine which it contains. Believing that this is not the case, that charges based upon this address cannot be successfully sustained, and that such a trial for heresy would be a cause of immeasurable disturbance and injury to the Church, your Committee in the minority recommend that no judicial proceedings be entered upon.

All of which is respectfully submitted.

J. H. McILVAINE,

Committee in the Minority.



